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ABSTRACT

Migrant student enrollment declines steadily in junior high school as a result of low achievement, poor self-esteem, social isolation, late enrollment/early withdrawal policies, and school attitude toward migrant students. Parents, educators, and 237 junior high school migrant students from Arizona, Michigan, New York, Wisconsin, Texas, and Florida were surveyed during 1984-85 to explore reasons for dropping out of school. Most frequently mentioned were inability to catch up, teacher negativism and apathy, and family financial dependence on migrant teenagers. Students who believed they would graduate listed a set of goals, willingness to study, and parental expectations and support as reasons for remaining in school. Those who did not expect to graduate listed as reasons the inevitability of falling behind, negative school factors, language and family problems, and substance abuse. Suggestions for improving school holding power included numerous social activities, employment opportunities, flexible scheduling, career awareness counseling, fostering of positive self-image, respect for cultural heritage, honest and sincere teachers, and emphasis on English language. Educators attending three migrant education workshops emphasized the importance of school-parent communication and parental involvement. Existing school- and student-oriented programs to curb dropout behavior are summarized. Enrollment data, survey questionnaire, and sample student transfer form are included. (LFL)

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INTRODUCTION

The Problem

Junior high at best is a frustrating experience for students, their parents, and their teachers. A prerequisite for any educator working with junior high students is the empathy to relive that agony of emotional upheaval, physical change, and identity crisis which characterize early adolescence. For the junior high migrant student with complications of seasonal mobility and the additional responsibility of helping to support the family, staying in school is even more difficult.

The Interstate Migrant Secondary Services Program initiated a project in 1984 designed to better understand the dropout related problems of junior high school migrant students and to publicize strategies which serve to encourage these students to stay in school.

This compendium provides an analysis of Migrant Student Record Transfer System enrollment data by grade and age; reviews the results of field contacts with junior high migrant students, their parents and teachers; summarizes the outcomes of workshops conducted during 1984 and 1985; and presents several strategies for migrant educators to consider in meeting the needs of their migrant junior high students.

Overview

The IMSSP developed a four stage plan of action to approach the junior high school migrant student issue:

A. Analyzed MSRTS data to verify age and grade at which the greatest number of migrants leave school.

B. Contacted several groups of junior high school migrant students to obtain their perceptions of what causes their peers to begin to think of dropping out of school. Parents and teachers also participated.

C. Conducted workshops with migrant counselors, teachers and program administrators.

D. Surveyed state directors of migrant education to ascertain the current status of dropout prevention programs directed specifically at junior high migrants.

PLAN OF ACTION

MSRTS Data

Migrant Student Record Transfer System data indicate that migrant student enrollment declines steadily in grades six through nine, dropping abruptly before tenth grade. Tenth grade enrollment is half that of sixth grade. Enrollments by age also decline steadily from twelve to sixteen, with a sharp decline occurring after age fifteen. (See below) In addition, the probability of not graduating from high school is greater for students who are overage at the end of ninth grade than for students who are not.

Although a significant exodus occurs after age fifteen and after ninth grade, the decision to stay in school or to drop out results from the cumulative effects of internal and external factors over a period of years. Internal factors include low achievement, poor self-esteem, and social isolation. External factors include late enrollment and early withdrawal policies and school attitude toward migrant students.

Only when educators review the experience of being a junior high student can the complications of being a junior high migrant student begin to be understood and appreciated. For many potential dropouts, the junior high or middle school sequence is the last and most critical opportunity to set high school graduation as a goal.

Enrollment trends among junior high school (grades 6-9) Status 1 migrant students (MSRTS 9/80-8/81)

	Grade	Enrollment	Change	Annual % Retention	Retention % from Grade 6	Retention % from Grade 1
	1	15725				
Jr.	6	10848	-4877			69
High	7	10275	-573	95	95	65
Grades	8	9721	-554	95	90	62
	9	8415	-1306	87	78	54
	10	5802	-2613	69	53	37

Enrollment trends among junior high school (ages 12-16) Status 1 migrant students (MSRTS 9/80-8/81)

	Age	Enrollment	Change	Annual % Retention	Retention % from Age 12	Retention % from Age 6
	6	14040				
Jr.	12	11659				83
High	13	11355	-304	97	97	81
Ages	14	10545	-810	93	90	75
	15	9523	-1022	90	82	68
	16	7807	-1716	82	67	56

STUDENT, PARENT, AND TEACHER CONTACTS

With the cooperation of state education departments and local school districts, the IMSSP coordinated several discussion sessions with junior high students, their parents, and educators. The sessions were intended to discover what, according to the participants, causes junior high students to become "turned off" and to begin to consider dropping out of school.

Sessions were conducted, typically, with small groups of junior high students (usually 10-15) in an informal setting. Parent sessions were similar in terms of numbers and settings. If English was a problem, a bilingual person was recruited to conduct/translate the discussion

During the summer and fall of 1984, discussions were held in Arizona, Michigan, New York and Wisconsin. Small groups of Texas students completed a questionnaire under the supervision of their migrant counselors in the fall of 1984. Junior high students in Florida participated in February 1985. A total of 237 students were interviewed.

The same group of questions was used with all the students. Five categories of responses emerged.

The first two categories included school and family problems which dominate the reasons for leaving school. The third and fourth categories included reasons students believe they will graduate and reasons they believe they will not. The fifth category listed factors which could increase the holding power of the school.

The following table provides details for each category:

School problems:

- teacher negativism and teacher apathy
- student inability to "catch-up"
- unrealistic optimism - students believe more will graduate than actually do
- ugly, inhospitable schools, and a threat to cultural heritage
- discrimination
- English language
- attendance

Family problems:

- financial dependence on migrant teenagers
- loss/lack of control
- marital stress, separation and divorce
- mobility
- pregnancy and teen marriage

An optimistic outlook for graduation is based on:

- desire for a better life
- willingness to study
- desire to fulfill parental expectations
- parental support
- career awareness
- desire to escape migrant labor

A pessimistic outlook for graduation is based on:

- language barriers
- family problems
- substance abuse
- continuing failure

The holding power of a school is enhanced by:

- social activities
- access to computers
- employment opportunities and compatible scheduling
- respect for cultural heritage
- counseling
- career exposure

Discussion Procedure

Sequentially, students were introduced to the discussion leader, and the purpose of the discussion was explained. The leader opened the session by asking the students to think of the kids they knew who had dropped out of school. The students shared this information without identifying specific people. They continued this through a structured series of questions and their responses were noted.

Following are the responses provided by each of the students, parents and educators to each of the discussion questions:

1. OF THE FRIENDS, RELATIVES AND ACQUAINTANCES YOU KNOW WHO HAVE DROPPED OUT OF SCHOOL, WHY DID THEY QUIT?

The responses centered on school problems and family problems. School problems dominated reasons for quitting.

Not liking school was most frequently based on disinclination to learn, boring teachers, and fighting and/or talking back to teachers. Some students spoke of teacher apathy and negativism toward migrants. Other dislikes centered on specific required courses.

Occasionally students expressed a feeling of discrimination. They felt that, regardless of aptitude and incentive, migrant students are placed in non-academic courses. Migrant students are more likely to be disciplined with out-of-school suspension, while non-migrants tend to be suspended in school.

Continuing family economic problems were viewed as a common reason for dropping out. Students who miss school to supplement their family income become increasingly discouraged as they fall further behind. Junior high students are less likely to become discouraged than senior high students because their progress from grade to grade tends to be based on competence, not credit accrual and clock hours of attendance. Most junior high students felt that if they were doing "ok" when they withdrew in the spring, they would be promoted to the next grade when they returned in the fall.

Students also mentioned drugs, pregnancy and marriage. Most students said that drug use was a problem, but only a few saw it as dropout related. For students who drop out because of pregnancy, half the students felt that even if kids return to school, the stigma and responsibility of parenting are too overwhelming, and the students would not finish.

2. DO YOU EXPECT MOST JUNIOR HIGH STUDENTS WHOM YOU KNOW TO GRADUATE?

Most students said that most of their peer group would eventually graduate, although a number of hardships were recognized. Receiving state participants believed that slightly more than half would eventually graduate.

A majority of students in Texas believed that the junior high students they knew would graduate. Two-thirds of the Florida students were unsure and the other third believed most of the junior high students they knew would not graduate.

Generally, only a small majority of all the students who participated were optimistic about graduation. In fact, the group believed more of their peers would graduate than is historically the case.

Large numbers of junior high migrant students expect they will graduate. **A large minority of junior high migrant students expect they will not graduate, i.e., have already been conditioned to believe they will drop out!**

3. WHY DO YOU EXPECT MOST JUNIOR HIGH MIGRANT STUDENTS WILL GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL?

This question was answered only by students who believed most junior high students would graduate.

Those expected to graduate from high school will make the effort and study; have the desire, a set of goals, and self-respect; want career options (other than field work) and a "good" job; and want to prove themselves, to repay and to assist their parents, and to fulfill parental expectations.

Some students said that being in school is better than being at home, having to find a job, getting into trouble, or working in the fields. Some said school is easy and "the smart thing to do," some teachers are helpful, school is where your friends are, and school keeps you out of trouble. Students also spoke of the attraction of varied athletic programs and athletic facilities. One group of students said their school encouraged them to stay by sponsoring special activities such as "Ditch Day," an organized skip day based on academic and behavioral eligibility.

Parents generally expressed optimism for their children's prospects for graduation even though they believe their children resent having to attend summer school and extended day sessions to catch up. Parents also believe that the social isolation experienced by migrant students is not a deterrant to graduation.

Parents agreed that their children should avoid becoming migrant laborers and that the school should respond with improved and expanded programs.

A group of Arizona parents felt that half to three quarters of junior high students would graduate from high school, a larger fraction than was usually projected. They said students are increasingly aware of better opportunities for graduation and therefore have a greater desire.

Educators in Gadsden, Arizona observed that, "the kids appear to be passing despite low reading scores and a general atmosphere of 'bumbling along.'" Most students were expected to graduate, although girls were seen as more likely to graduate than boys.

4. WHY DO YOU EXPECT MOST JUNIOR HIGH MIGRANT STUDENTS WILL NOT GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL?

This question was answered only by students who believed most junior high students would not graduate.

Generally, junior high migrant students feel they have minimal academic success. They perceive that students drop out because they get behind and frustrated; find classes boring with no apparent relevance and that teachers and counselors are unresponsive and unsympathetic; are overwhelmed by family pressure to work (they either work instead of going to school or run away to avoid the family and end up working to support themselves); become pregnant; or fall victims of drug abuse. Overall, the frustration from falling behind appears to be the primary reason for dropping out.

Specific reasons for dropping out which students mentioned included insufficient credit accrual, failing courses, and pregnancy. Students will not graduate if they make little or no effort; dislike school; haven't mastered English and won't seek/accept help; have problems with drugs, home and police; are encouraged out of school (in order to work) by their parents; and/or have to get married. Some students said that escaping from parental requirements to work led to running away, and, thereafter, dropping out of school.

Texas students added fear of increased and unattainable graduation requirements.

Only Florida students mentioned fear of being too old. However, age may be an unspoken factor in many of the reasons above.

Arizona and Michigan parents asserted that dropping out is common and is due in part to parental limitations. Parents believe their inability to motivate their children to stay in school reflects their lack of education, lack of English skills, and lack of familiarity with or understanding of graduation/credit requirements.

Parents also noted the independence of their children. They said that students want to be on their own, have their own money and own a car. Children have easy access to money. At an age when values are unsettled, "easy money" leads to instant gratification, greed for more money, and a belief that school impedes satisfaction of that greed. Parents also believe some students yield to peer pressure from other school dropouts.

Many parents felt that school is an "ugly" place. They said that students fear fighting and feel threatened by the aggressiveness of other ethnic groups. Mexican-American migrant students from Florida are especially apprehensive. Generally, cultural differences and the discomfort which accompanies minority status lead some students to withdraw.

5. WHAT DO JUNIOR HIGH STUDENTS LIKE ABOUT SCHOOL?

More than anything else, school is a social institution. Junior high students view school as a place to meet and be with friends.

Activities, sports, clubs, and anything which provides the security of togetherness while trying to sort out who you are and where you're going help fulfill the school's social role.

Students also like the serious side of school. They appreciate learning/improving English skills, computers, general opportunities to learn and teachers who make learning fun. They expect that education will lead them to non-migrant career alternatives. Some see graduation as a goal prescribed by their parents; others see graduation as a chance to prove themselves to their parents.

School is better than field work and better than being at home. School means increased freedom, sharing ideas, and oh yes, food!

Many parents identified the same positive features of schools mentioned by their children: togetherness, supportive teachers, computers, counselors who care, opportunities to speak and to read English, and sports.

Most Mexican-American parents emphasized their support for promoting English. Although they do not want their children to be punished for speaking Spanish, schools which require English mastery are more highly regarded by parents than those which are less demanding.

Teachers also recognize socializing as the primary attraction of school. And, they agreed that students appreciate open and honest te ers, learning new concepts, games, and computers.

6. WHAT DO JUNIOR HIGH MIGRANT STUDENTS DISLIKE ABOUT SCHOOL?

Student criticism centered on fairness; like all students, migrants were quick to condemn anything which they perceived as unfair.

They expressed concern about being older than non-migrant students in their grade levels and some dislike for extended day attendance requirements. Texas students who attend receiving state programs were quite critical of homebase schools which failed to recognize their summer hours of attendance.

The students felt schools discourage young mothers from returning to or continuing in school. They also felt that attendance requirements exclude some migrant students from participating in fall sports.

Parents disliked the incidence of fighting, teacher apathy, and poor food. Parents sometimes rode buses to control fighting. They were concerned about teachers who seemed neither to care nor to understand the children's problems. Bad water and hygiene problems at fountains also bothered the parents.

Parents did believe that students had inadequate numbers of counselors, and were upset if not allowed to converse in Spanish.

Some parents said the school causes students to fear failure and that they need more praise.

Teachers shared the belief that junior high students dislike boring subjects with little or no world application, intolerant teachers, discrimination as migrant students, speaking singly or in front of the class, and anything else which is or seems to be unfair. It was believed that boys are more sensitive to being overage than girls. However, generally students are motivated by awareness of the career limitations resulting from being a dropout.

7. HOW DO YOU RATE THE FOLLOWING PROBLEMS FACED BY SOME JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS? SOME PROBLEM OR NO PROBLEM?

a. <u>failing two or more elementary grades</u> - Most students agreed that this was a problem. All regarded the situation as uncomfortable, but only half felt the experience would contribute to a decision to drop out. Parents agreed that being bigger than other students would be uncomfortable but would not cause the students to drop out.

b. not being accepted by non-migrant classmates - Junior high migrant students have no problem with acceptance when they are in Texas. Florida migrant students feel unaccepted. Arizona migrant students feel reasonably comfortable except when they migrate to California. All students registered lower feelings of acceptance when migrating to midwestern states, but not to the point of withdrawing from school. Florida students felt a greater sense of isolation in the north than Texas students.

c. not finishing spring classes before migrating north, and not returning to home school in time for fall opening - Two thirds of the students felt that early withdrawal and late returns were not problems for junior high migrant students. The other third felt that leaving friends, changing work, and having no chance to make up missed classes were discouraging. The majority said their homebase junior high/middle schools would advance migrant students to the next grade if they were doing satisfactory work at the time they withdrew in the spring. Some students said that kids who care will make up work they have missed without any problem.

Apparently this issue becomes more of a problem for high school migrant students whose credit accrual is based on a combination of competence and attendance, rather than competence alone.

e. being older than other junior high students - Like the question about failing elementary grades, this question brought responses which suggested discomfort results from being overage. In isolation, most felt this was not a reason for migrant students to drop out. For some students the loss of self-confidence associated with being overage when combined with other problems might lead to thoughts of quitting school.

f. having trouble with speaking or understanding English - Language problems were limited to Mexican-American students (who comprise the majority of migrants) Among these students, most agreed that trouble with speaking or understanding English was a major and discouraging problem. Some students felt ESL classes could offset the problem; in the absence of ESL, language barriers could cause students to give up and to drop out. Parents strongly agreed with this conclusion.

g. missing school in order to work - Two thirds of the students agreed that missing school in order to work could cause students to fall behind and, eventually, to drop out. However, many students had not experienced work as a necessity or priority and were only able to recall acquaintances who had been working or to speculate as to what could happen if their own parents required them to work. Students who participated in summer evening programs were able to work and go to school. Students in homebase settings obviously were attending school and not experiencing the problem.

Parents discussed the same list and reached agreement. Dropout related problem areas which parents identified were having trouble with speaking or understanding English and missing school in order to work.

Not being accepted by non-migrant students, withdrawing early, and returning late were not sufficient problems to cause students to consider dropping out. Several parents commented about the amount of work missed by returning late from wherever they'd been, but didn't see the problem as insurmountable.

8. WHY DO SOME JUNIOR HIGH STUDENTS BEGIN TO THINK OF QUITTING SCHOOL?

This question was placed late in the discussion as a refinement and extension of the questions dealing with what students dislike about school and why other students have already dropped out. There were no surprises. Students emphasized that language and working rather than attending school were the major factors contributing to junior high student decisions to drop out. Less frequently mentioned reasons for dropping out included early marriage and independence. Other reasons included basic dislike of school (based on falling behind, finding school too difficult, being overage, and being excessively absent), drugs, negative peer pressure, and inability to project the value and application of a high school diploma into the adult world.

Parents recognized the internal dilemmas faced by students in the transition from elementary to middle/junior high schools. Students need parental support and encouragement to survive a "difficult" period in their lives. Parents who don't have to work have better opportunities to help. As expected, parents with language barriers share the same pessimistic view as their language handicapped children.

Returning to homebase late in the fall is seen as a greater threat to academic survival than early spring withdrawal. Parents are concerned that concepts which are initiated and developed in September and which set the foundation for the year are neither retaught nor reviewed. Entering school in the north in the fall isn't always adequate because courses do not necessarily synchronize with the courses students will enter at their homebase schools when they finally arrive.

9. WHAT CAN SCHOOLS DO TO ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO CONTINUE THEIR EDUCATION?

Many student responses to this question reflected the socializing features of school, without which junior high students become "turned off." They talked about the magnetism of sports, social activities, and access to elective programs. They listed various electives which they believe help keep students involved: news, home economics, computer, art, shop, guitar, music, tutoring, dances, student council, and dramatics.

Students expressed a need for more access to clubs of all kinds. They recommended field trips designed to create exposure to and awareness of career alternatives to migrant labor. Because of the education and training options available, increased awareness of military programs was also suggested.

Economic considerations dominated suggestions from students in Texas. Providing employment or assistance in finding employment, and reducing the time required to complete the school day (in order to have more time to work) led their recommendations list.

Suggestions regarding teachers and counselors included positive and supportive attitudes toward students in general and migrants in particular. Students requested bilingual and experienced teachers who are fair and sensitive to individual student problems, and as one group put it, who "keep their personal and home problems out of school."

Schools should provide advanced programs which would allow migrant students to accelerate completion of graduation requirements. Schools should devise compensatory mechanisms to avoid loss of credit due to migrancy and transfer. Schools should create and provide home study units for migrant students who cannot attend school (P.A.S.S. program take note).

Hands-on courses (labs, computers, etc.), exposure to role models, and better facilities (cafeteria, library, gym, swimming pool, vocational programs, wall murals, T.V., landscaping, and new desks) were among other recommendations.

Students suggested alcohol and drug awareness programs and spoke of the value of opportunities to meet with reformed drug users. They recommended an "in-school" suspension program during which students received tutoring and counseling. Some also encouraged catch up programs such as study hours for students who fall behind either due to suspension or migrant related absence.

Parents talked of strategies for offsetting dropout tendencies among high risk students. Especially lacking they felt were long-range life goals which are unattainable to migrant laborers. Parents would like to see schools provide more career preparation and exposure to career alternatives. More counselors and separate counselors for girls and boys are needed. Communications are needed so students are not threatened by parental involvement in school. Increased cultural awareness and respect is needed. One parent singled out cultural biases in social studies texts. She noted that the Mexican/Indian presence on this continent long before Columbus is neglected in most social studies textbooks.

In general, the school can improve its services to students by being more sensitive to student background and by encouraging individual self-respect.

Parents believe that teachers should encourage students to stay in school, rather than to quit and go to work. Teachers should improve communication with students and remove prejudice toward students. The school should be more communicative with parents, should increase the number of bilingual counselors and should reduce class size.

Some parents suggested that the problems of student independence and parental frustration could be resolved with more bilingual counselors to help bridge the gap. Other parents said their lack of understanding made it impossible for them to support the school. Without parental support of the school, students will believe parents do not value the school. The problem is one of language and culture.

Teacher recommendations included increased individual attention, supplemental services organized by age rather than grade, and increased program awareness for students. They also equate the holding power of the school with social activities (meeting friends, playing sports, and going to dances), avoiding home responsibilities, and avoiding work.

SUMMARY OF STUDENT, PARENT AND TEACHER DISCUSSIONS

School and family problems dominate the student-expressed reasons for why "other" migrant students have left school. Teacher negativism and apathy were the most frequently mentioned school problems. Inability to catch up has discouraged many ex-students from continuing.

Family financial dependence on migrant teenagers was the most common non-school reason for dropping out.

More junior high students believe they will graduate than actually will. The optimism of the majority is refuted by MSRTS enrollment figures. This dismal observation is compounded by the fact that the optimistic majority is only slightly larger than a pessimistic minority who've already become conditioned to expect that most migrant students will not graduate.

Among the optimists, desire for a "better life," an existing set of goals, willingness to study, a desire to fulfill parental expectations, and parental support formed the basis for their positivism.

Parents who share student optimism believe their children are aware of the better career opportunities which high school graduation provides and that their children do not want the entrapment which migrant labor has meant to them.

Educators tended to limit their expectations to statements of basic survival. The students will succeed in spite of themselves.

The minority of students who responded pessimistically reflected negative school factors, language problems, family problems, and substance abuse. More than anything else, the frustration and inevitability of falling behind and the resulting failure were cited as reasons why migrant students believed most of their peers would not graduate.

Many parents expressed an inability to guide or control their children's desire for independence. Further, some actually fear the school as an ugly, inhospitable place which threatens their children and their cultural heritage.

Students, parents and staff agreed that the opportunity to socialize is the most attractive feature of school. All three groups recognized the significance of sincerity and honesty among teachers. Parents emphasized the importance of learning English.

Student dislikes focus essentially on anything they perceive as unfair. Parents and teachers shared a concern for boredom. Teachers also echoed student concerns for fairness and noted discriminatory attitudes toward migrant students.

Of the specific problem areas which students were asked to rate, having trouble with English was viewed as the most significant. Missing school to work was projected to be the second most significant problem, although very few of the students who participated had experienced the problem themselves. Parents shared their children's perceptions.

Students also identified language problems and missing school as among the primary reasons why junior high migrant students begin to consider dropping out. Parents shared these concerns but were also worried about their own inability to support and encourage their children through a difficult and transitional period in their lives.

The school can improve its holding power by capitalizing on its image as a socializing facility according to the students. Students have a large menu of academic, club, athletic, elective, and career exploratory activities which bring students together. For students whose families need their children's income, the school could provide employment opportunities, counseling, or scheduling more compatible with student employment needs.

Parents spoke more emphatically about the need for the school to provide students with exposure to career alternatives, to foster postive self-image, and to respect the students' cultural heritage.

WORKSHOPS

Two workshops were conducted during the 1984-85 school year regarding dropout prevention among junior high migrant students. The first, Preventing Junior High Migrant Students from Becoming High School Dropouts, was presented in Brownsville, Texas, November 9, 1984 in conjunction with the annual Texas Migrant Education Conference.

A second workshop, The Interstate Junior High Migrant Dropout Prevention Conference, occurred in Eagle Pass, Texas (February 19, 1985) and was repeated in Edinburg, Texas (February 21, 1985). The workshops were designed by the Texas Migrant Interstate Program and the Interstate Migrant Secondary Services Program in cooperation with several participating states and Texas school districts.

The workshops enabled Texas and receiving state educators to respond to the issues raised during previous discussions with students, parents and other educators. The Eagle Pass and Edinburg workshops stressed communication between the local school districts and the parents. Parental involvement was rated as the most critical area to be addressed to the point of "indoctrination" of parents on the need of the migrant students to stay in school. Educators must face parents and show them that they really care for their children's education.

Also mentioned was the need for teachers who are sensitive to the migrant students' needs as well as counselors who have specialized in junior high issues.

Action plans to be recommended to receiving state SEA's/LEA's for junior high interstate migrant students as a result of the workshops included:

- Hold briefings on the implications of HR 72 (when clarified) for junior high placement and retention.
- Encourage development and/or expansion and evaluation of dropout prevention programs.
- Implement procedures for timely transfer of course, grade, and attendance information.
- Increase counseling services to insure appropriate placement and most beneficial services.
- Initiate direct school-to-school contact.
- Re-evaluate 1985 state plans.
- Establish academic requirements as a program priority.
- Increase/initiate parental involvement in dropout prevention and program attendance.
- Invite Texas educators to work with receiving SEA's regarding HR 72.

SUMMARY

Asked how receiving states could best serve junior high migrants, Texas educators agreed that students should master and complete basic academic subjects. Language arts and math were reviewed as priorities.

Participants also agreed that timely communications among schools and parents is essential. Receiving schools and Texas schools need telephone access to insure proper placement and continuity.

Both Texas and receiving state educators said that an immediate transfer of grade, course, attendance and special needs information is vital. The Texas Migrant Interstate Program (TMIP) arranged a follow up meeting with Texas schools interested in piloting a junior high information exchange form. The form, similar to the secondary credit exchange form, provides for current and recommended schedules. (See Appendix)

Small group sessions at both workshops gave participants time to respond to concerns expressed by junior high migrant students. Recommendations generated by the groups included increased and meaningful parent involvement, career awareness, day care centers for younger siblings, counseling, more accessible records, preservation and respect for ethnic heritage, exchange of approved textbook lists and the essential elements of curriculum, and many other traditionally successful educational services.

Participants at both workshops advocated parent involvement. Parents should be involved at school, should be encouraged to promote study skills, should be given career and employment information, and should understand the importance of attendance and the implications of state legislated graduation requirements.

Counseling for students at realistic times and locations, and counseling directed toward potential dropouts was recommended. Also suggested were sessions to improve students' communication skills and self-concept. Outreach programs should include counseling for migrant students too timid to seek help and those whose schedules make regular counseling services inaccessible. Students need to share problems and emotions with counselors who truly care.

Workshop participants generally were in agreement with the concerns expressed by students and parents. The action plans recommended by these educators reflect some specific solutions to school-related reasons for dropping out. The following section, "Dropout Prevention strategies", details some existing programs that are attempting to curb dropout behavior.

DROPOUT PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Programs to prevent junior high migrant students from becoming high school dropouts tend to fall into two categories: school oriented and student oriented. Considerable overlapping between school and student oriented programs exists, but there are certain distinctions.

School oriented programs involve prevention strategies designed to offset problems within the school which encourage migrant students to become dropouts. Issues such as teacher and counselor conflicts, career awareness and language enhancement are included in school oriented programs.

Student oriented programs involve prevention strategies designed to offset individual problems, some of which are common to junior high students in general, but most of which are unique to migrants. Issues such as family pressure to work, pregnancy and early marriage, social isolation, and self-image are included in student oriented programs.

SCHOOL ORIENTED PROGRAMS

1. School orientation - Junior high migrant students preparing for senior high need to become aware of behavioral expectations, disciplinary procedures, the credit accrual process, programs for early withdrawing and late returning migrant students, etc. Visits to the high school to meet counselors, teachers and administrators are recommended.

   Orientation for incoming middle school or junior high students is equally important. Incoming migrant students can be made to feel more secure through summer orientation programs which cover curriculum, discipline, activities, rules, regulations, attendance, health, homeroom, etc.

2. Community-based evening tutorial and homework assistance programs - Use of community facilities and volunteers to provide academic support for migrant students is one way to improve each individual's sense of self-worth.

   Goals for Youth is an example of such a program. Goals for Youth uses current and retired professonal athletes, some of whom may have been migrants, to demonstrate success, will power and other positive values necessary to "make it." Athletes typically make large group general presentations and do small group and/or individual follow up with students on goal-setting and futuring.

3. Career/vocational awareness - Migrant students need access to career, vocational and employment programs. Community resource people can work with students in school or at program/work sites. Based on student needs assessments, students can be referred to program resources, personal and career counseling, work-site exploration, instruction in job-getting and job-keeping skills, and job placement.

A variation is provided through one semester, credit-bearing courses which deal with career awareness and employability skills. Such courses provide instruction in improving employability skills, career goals, developing self-awareness and self-concept, decision-making skills, and vocational exploration.

Student-organized career day programs provide another variation. Students may invite community members to share the abilities, skills, training, and decision-making which led them into their careers. As a follow up, students may develop personal career files.

World of Work van trips provide migrant junior high students a chance to visit a large variety of business and industrial sites. Students travel for a week and see first hand the geography of their current state. They experience group survival skills by camping out each day. Adolescent counselors and college student interns chaperone.

Shadowing community figures who are successful provides migrant students with an opportunity to observe directly the day to day role of people whose career areas are of interest. This program usually involves identification of career areas and practitioners. The practitioners are invited to speak to the student group, and the shadowing project evolves from individual student interest and/or curiosity.

Participation in a "Junior Achievement" type of organization provides students with an opportunity to study free enterprise concepts and to build a miniature company. Student experiences and responsibilities include manufacturing, marketing, financing, and payroll.

4. Positive role models - College student interns provide one-to-one assistance to junior high migrant students. Interns provide cultural, recreational and educational activities, and provide positive role models. They also assist with goal setting and academic life skills. Typically, interns work under the supervision of adolescent outreach coordinators.

5. Vocational projects - The Migrant Youth Vocational Project works with students beginning in grade 8. The project provides migrant youth with access to vocational, career and employment programs. Resource specialists work with students in schools and/or at program or work sites. Services include referrals to programs and other resources, vocational assessments, personal and career counseling, work-site exploration, instruction in job-getting and job-keeping skills, and job placement.

6. Academic programs - Briefly stated, continuing programs for students whose migrancy interrupts their academic progress are essential. Compensatory academic programs take many forms but should be directed to the needs and availability of the student.

STUDENT ORIENTED PROGRAMS

1. Self-image - "This Is Me" is a photographic approach to improving migrant students' self-concepts. Students learn basic photography, including how to use cameras and how to develop and process film. Students select subjects through which they explore the past and present, and from which they can project the future and their relationships with it. Students display their accomplishments, increase verbal and written communications, receive recognition for their creativity, and begin to sense or project a future role for themselves. Goal setting evolves and students discover their potential to determine what they will become and what they will do.

   "Be A Better You" is a workshop for junior high migrant girls designed to encourage positive self-concept. The workshop includes a cosmetologist and a public health nurse who provide girls with instruction in appearance and bodily care. Follow up activities include grooming, clothes budgeting, meal planning and exercise.

   "Hobby Groups" provide migrant students with experiences in sharing current interests and discovering new ones. Students gain recognition for their accomplishments, improve oral and written communication skills, and learn of new options.

   Migrant students should be encouraged and welcomed into clubs and activities available to non-migrants. Even though students may leave before the school ends, they need to feel wanted and valued during whatever time period they are present. Clubs which meet during "free time" at school are popular with all students. One 4-H club grew 600% in one year and developed sports, cooking, sewing and dramatic activities. Parents were actively involved and club officers sat in on the school's student council meetings.

   Migrant counselors, among their many responsibilities, need to watch for danger signals among their "high risk" junior high students. Support systems and personal counseling should be ready and accessible.

2. Parental involvement - Counselors should be alert for early warning signals from migrant students in order to involve the family in correction, remediation, clarification, etc.

   Parent inclusion in ooth junior high school and senior high school orientation programs will enable them to provide their children with a better support system for dealing with the school system and fully benefitting from it.

   The school is part of the migrant student's extended family. As such, parent involvement is essential to nurture this concept and to enhance the student's sense of security within the school system. Parental assistance should be requested to plan and carry out fund-raising, graduation, orientation, field trips, fiestas, etc.

   Parents should be involved with programs to explore higher educational opportunities and other options such as apprenticeships, trade programs, and the miiitary.

3. Medical - The school nurse should be aware of migrant students and any special medical services they may need.

SUMMARY

The strategies for school and student oriented programs are merely a composite of some of the kinds of programs which have come to the attention of the IMSSP. The list is by no means exhaustive.

It is hoped that conscientious educators and others whose influence and concern make a difference in the lives of junior high migrant students will consider the findings of this report. These findings can be measured against specific populations to ensure that the junior high migrant students of today become the high school graduates of tomorrow.

APPENDIX A

Junior High Migrant Student Forum

School _____ Date _____

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Generally, how are junior high students you know doing in school?

_____

_____

2. Do you expect most junior high students you know to graduate?

_____

3. Please list reasons for your answer to question 2.

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. Please list things which junior high students you know like about school.

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. Please list things which junior high students you know don't like about school.

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. Please rate the following problems faced by some junior high students.

	Some Problems	No Problems
a. Failing 2 or more elementary grades.	_____	_____
b. Not being accepted by non-migrant classmates.	_____	_____
c. Not finishing spring classes before migrating north.	_____	_____
d. Not going back to home school in time for the fall opening.	_____	_____
e. Being older than other junior high students.	_____	_____
f. Having trouble with speaking or understanding English.	_____	_____
g. Missing school in order to work.	_____	_____

7. Why do some junior high migrant students begin to think of quitting school?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. What could schools do to encourage students to continue their education?

APPENDIX B

TRANSFER FORM
JUNIOR HIGH/MIDDLE SCHOOL

STUDENT_____ D.O.B._____ GRADE_____
MSRTS#_____ PARENT'S NAME_____
SCHOOL DISTRICT_____ CONTACT PERSON_____
CAMPUS NAME_____ PHONE# ( )_____
CAMPUS ADDRESS_____ CITY_____ STATE_____ ZIP_____
ENTRY DATE_____ WITHDRAWAL DATE_____
TRANSFERRING TO_____

GRADING SCALE: A_____ C_____ F 69 & Below
B_____ D_____

SUBJECT/TEACHER	(by six weeks) 1st Semester					2nd Semester					Yrly Avg.	Initials if Books are clear	Teacher's Initials
	1st	2nd	3rd	Exam	Avg	4th	5th	6th	Exam	Avg.			

Textbook Card Clear_____ Library Clear_____

Program Participation:
Gifted & Talented_____
ESOL_____
ESL_____
Vocational_____
Other_____

*Special Education:
Resource Math_____
Reading_____
IEP Available_____
Speech Therapy_____
Other_____

Test Information:
Name of Test_____
_____
Month/Year Tested_____
Reading_____%
Language_____%
Math_____%

*Sp. Ed. Info. requiring parent release. YES NO

Language Assessment Scores: English Level ( )_____ Spanish Level ( )_____

Nurse's Comments:_____
_____
Nurse's Signature

COMMENTS:_____
_____
_____
_____

Signature Title

Date Submitted

APPENDIX C

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This compendium of information about junior high students was made possible through the efforts of concerned educators, parents, and students nationwide. Thanks therefore are extended to those people in the states of Arizona, Florida, Idaho, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, New York, Oregon, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin who participated in this project. Their expertise and commitment were crucial to the success of the IMSSP's effort to compile and to analyze information about junior high school migrant students.

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